

CHEATING UNCLE SAM

SMUGGLING TRICKS BY WHICH THE GOVERNMENT IS A HEAVY LOSER.

Enormous Importations Which Pay No Duty—Interesting Story of Dishonest Devices Employed.

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 16.—The enormous amounts of which Uncle Sam is robbed through customs-house frauds will never be known. The government has 1,500 employees devoted to their detection, and its spies are scattered all over the world. Its collections in the way of duties amount last year to more than \$32,000,000, and the expenses of making these collections was almost 6 per cent. of this vast sum. The amount uncollected will never be known. Our customs-house records are peppered with perjury and fraud.

Many of the big importers are in collusion with the European manufacturers to evade the payment of duties. They enter their goods at much lower prices than they actually pay for them, notwithstanding the fact that if discovered they are subject to heavy fines and increased duties. I saw a summary of the collections made by the Treasury Department during the past few years of this sort of fines and amounts arising from undervaluation. During the past five years the Treasury Department has collected more than \$5,000,000 in penalties and in the increase of duties. This is a million dollars a year, and it probably does not represent one-tenth of the actual amount that Uncle Sam is annually robbed of in this way.

The law as to importation of goods is very strict. A foreign merchant who ships goods here must first go before the American consul at the port from which he intends to ship the merchandise and swear as to the kind, quality and quantity of the articles he proposes to ship to the United States. He has to have three invoices, describing the goods and giving their cost in Europe. The law provides that the goods must be entered for duty at the market price at which they are sold to other countries. In many cases the goods are entered at a much lower valuation than this. The European merchant charges the importer a fair price, but he makes out the bill at a lower price, and the two try to cheat the government out of its duties. At the present time the customs bureau has its special examiners or detectives traveling about through Europe and trying to prevent this. They are visiting big factories. They are making their reports to the consul, and it is their business to find out how Uncle Sam is being cheated and prevent it. They are not doing this, but they are doing something. But, notwithstanding their efforts, millions of dollars' worth of goods are fraudulently imported every year, and they strive in vain to mend this hole in Uncle Sam's pocket.

Enormous amounts of goods are smuggled into the United States by travelers every year. It is estimated that there are now in Europe more than 100,000 Americans who are taking their summer vacations on the other side, and who will return in the fall. At a low estimate ninety out of every hundred of those will bring back at least \$100 worth of European goods. I talked with a Treasury Department official about this matter yesterday, and he said that \$200 would be a low estimate. You can easily see how these purchases will run into the tens of thousands and into the millions. The most of the goods will be dutiable, and it is safe to say that the above amount will evade the customs. At \$100 per traveler this means the introduction of \$20,000,000 worth of dutiable goods, and at \$300 per person it would amount to \$18,000,000 worth. These travelers will be met upon their arrival in New York, and the goods will be passed as personal effects. A woman has the right to take into the country a wardrobe corresponding to her own in life, and if she is well-to-do she can load herself with diamonds. Many a New York swell brings in eight or ten suits of clothes, and I am told that there are men who make vacation trips to Europe on the basis that the expenses of their trip will be largely made up by the profits which they will make through buying their winter clothing in Europe.

PARIS DRESSES ARE SMUGGLED.

This is especially so when women are considered. Dresses cost just about half as much what they do at home, and they are smuggled in by the tens of thousands. I was told the other day by a man connected with the customs that New York dress-makers often send the girls in their emigration to Europe with the proper measurements for dresses for their customers. The dresses are made in the latest Paris styles and are furnished to the Americans at exorbitant prices. The dressmaking girls pass them as their own personal property, and some of the maidens who, on the big ocean liners, are looked upon as American heiresses, are smuggling milliners. The government does all it can to prevent such importations. It has its detectives on both sides of the big pond, and the stewards of the steamships often give tips to the inspectors. There are female inspectors at New York who sometimes meet these smuggling maidens upon their landing. They may have gotten a pointer from the other side, or the girls may have been too confident in their talks with other people on the vessel. If suspected they are taken with their baggage into a private room at the custom house. If the girl cannot show that she is all right her wardrobe is sometimes taken from her. If the inspectors are pretty sure she is a smuggler they may make her try on some of the clothes. A girl with a thirty-inch bust and a twenty-inch waist explaining the possession of a forty-two-inch Paris corset, and a tall, gaunt maiden of five feet ten looks very funny when her form is clad in a Paris dress made for one of the young ladies of the four hundred who measures five feet two. The inspectors have to be careful, however, in making such arrests. There must be something more than pure suspicion to depend upon, as the examination of innocent persons is liable to involve them in great trouble. The dressmakers of Paris, however, seem to have no compunctions or doubts about their being able to deliver goods in America, and in 1,500 Chinese laborers in the ring were again that they could find any orders that I would send them at London prices.

I am told that there are English tailors who send their representatives to America every year to carry clothes over and bring new measurements back. Among the customers of these men are some of our most noted public characters, and a list of the names of American swells who get their clothes in this way would make interesting reading.

It is hard to get the real facts about smuggling from the officers of the United States treasury. Our customs officials are, to a large extent, detectives, and they will not permit their names to be used in connection with any matter which they give to the press. They think that the exposure of the methods of smuggling would incite others to go and do likewise, and the information which I give in this article is based upon talks with a number of prominent officials whose names I cannot give.

The expectation is that a great amount of jewelry will be brought into the United States by the travelers this fall. The good times are fast throwing down the fences of economy, and the savings of the past few years will cause heavy European ex-

penditure. There will be a good demand for diamonds with our approaching prosperity, and they will be brought in in all sorts of ways. Not long ago a young American swelled attempt to evade the customs on a diamond present. He was in Europe and he wanted to send these diamonds to Miss Fay Templeton, the actress. He did not care to leave Europe himself, and he perhaps thought it safer to send the diamonds by his valet. The young man arrived in New York all right. He was an ordinary looking fellow, and he passed the inspectors without trouble. As he hurried up the stairs, however, his haste was noted by one of the officers, whose sharp eyes also discovered that the young man's coat tails wobbled in a very curious way. It looked as though there was something heavy in his rear pocket. They called to him. He stopped and they asked him what made his coat bulge out in that strange manner. He turned white at the question and started to run. They seized him and found the diamonds in his pocket. They were confiscated, of course, and the actress lost her jewels.

A DRINK WHICH COST \$300.

Another prominent American who for some time was the head of an American exchange in London, did quite a smuggling business in the way of diamonds. He passed the customs several times, and he finally became so bold that he betted to his fellows that he could bring through any amount of jewels without trouble. One day while taking a drink in the Hoffman House barroom the subject of passing the customs officers came up, and this man said:

"Why, gentlemen, it is the easiest thing imaginable to skin those custom house officers. They think they are very smart, but they are blind as bats. I could give you a dozen ways to get past them. I have brought in cloth and jewelry, and I have never been detected. Why, only last January I brought in a diamond necklace and sold it to a big corset manufacturer who wanted it for his wife. I got \$1,230 for that necklace and both the lady and myself made a nice thing out of it." While the young man was saying this, however, it happened that a special treasury agent was standing nearby. He inquired as to the matter up during the next few days and reported it to the collector. The manager of the exchange, the gentleman smuggler, received notice to come to the custom house, and before he left he paid \$300 for that drink and indiscreet remark which followed it in the Hoffman barroom. The detective, of course, got his percentage, and had the smuggler not been a man of prominence might have gone to prison.

This man is by no means the first who has been discovered by the revenue officers by his boasting. Every year a number of smuggling operations are discovered by the criminals being too free with their confidences both on the way across the Atlantic and after they have arrived. An instance occurred not long ago of a politician from one of the Western States who got a valuable diamond through without paying and then sold it for \$20,000. After doing so he boasted to his fellows about it. He had an enemy in the crowd and this man sent a note to the New York custom house. An inspector was sent out and the man was arrested. He had to refund, and instead of making a fortune he lost one. Diamonds are smuggled in all sorts of ways. They are so small that they can easily be concealed, and it is not unusual to put them into soap, to have them sunk between the soles of the shoes or in the padding of a coat. The treasury officials say that instances are known of men concealing diamonds and cases have occurred where they have been put into raw meat and fed to dogs just before landing, and the dogs thus brought off with the diamonds inside of them. This last is something similar to a story which has just come out concerning the smuggling of opium from British Columbia into the United States. As the story goes, it is doctored up and fed to old oxen, who are then driven across the frontier and killed in order to get the opium out of their stomachs. Any one who knows anything as to the horrible taste of opium and of the decided objections that any sensible ox would have to eating it would suggest this story decidedly fey.

At least it is so regarded at the Treasury Department.

MONEY IN OPIUM.

Opium is smuggled, however, in all sorts of ways. The business has fallen off since the reduction of the duty from \$12 to \$6 a pound. It still goes on, however, and great quantities are shipped into the United States every year. It is estimated that \$20,000,000 worth of the drug are sent annually in the United States, and a treasury official says that more than 1,000,000 of our people have the opium habit in a greater or less degree. There are hundreds of men and women who use opium and opium who are never suspected, and the opium commission which was sent by England to India, and which has just made its report, states that opium users are just as common in the far east as moderate drinkers are in this country, and that one can eat a little opium all his life without becoming an opium drunkard. At any rate, there is a vast consumption of opium in the United States, and it is estimated that at least 100,000 pounds of that used are smuggled across the northern frontier from British Columbia. This escapes the duty, and at the old rate it would represent a loss to Uncle Sam of \$1,200,000 a year, and at the present duty of \$600,000 a year. The opium is brought in the crude state from China or India and is manufactured at the great factories along Puget sound into opium for smoking and medicine. The British own the factories, and it is said that hundreds of thousands of dollars are invested in the business, and fortunes have, I am told, been made by smuggling the drug into the United States.

For years there was a great opium ring on the Pacific coast. The department knew that it was in operation, but it could not get evidence against it. It was so strong that it bribed or intimidated the inspectors. About a year ago, however, ancient evidence was collected for the demanding of a special grand jury at Portland, and this grand jury found indictments against twenty-seven persons, among whom were an ex-collector of customs and an ex-special agent. A few months later another grand jury found additional indictments, and forty persons were charged by the two juries with conspiracy to smuggle opium and Chinese laborers into the United States. As the matter went on it was found to be even more serious than had been suspected. The trials established that in the twelve months preceding thirty thousand pounds of opium had been smuggled into Portland alone. This should have paid a duty of \$180,000, and it was also shown that the same ring had during that time smuggled in 1,500 Chinese laborers. In the ring were some prominent men of the States of Washington and Oregon, and of the forty seven of the smugglers pleaded guilty and three others were convicted.

It is a curious thing that ex-customs house officers frequently engage in smuggling. The ex-collector of this Portland ring was probably tempted by the money made in the successful smuggling of opium, which passed under his eyes while in office, to engage in the same business. A similar case occurred not long ago on Puget sound. An ex-official had smuggled in a lot of opium in cans. He was suspected, and the cans were captured and sent into a government warehouse. Upon being taken he did not deny having the opium, but said that he

had gone into the scheme in order to detect other smugglers, and that he was still working for the United States. This was not believed by the inspectors, and they kept a close watch upon him and the opium. It was afterward found that his friends had bribed the janitor, and they were discovered removing the opium and putting blocks of wood into the cans. This was found out before the trial. Had it not been so, the ex-official would have said that they should open the cans in court, and upon the wood being discovered the story of his being a bogus smuggler for the sake of his detective scheme would have seemed true, and he would probably have escaped. Another case of a customs official becoming corrupt was that of a man named Gardner, who was acting as chief inspector in the Port Townsend district, when four trunks came into Seattle checked by Portland. The inspector at Seattle suspected that they contained opium, and he telegraphed ahead that they should be detained. This man was a subordinate of Gardner's, and Gardner, hearing of this telegram, went on ahead and took charge of the trunks on the ground that he was the chief inspector and had a right to do so. He took these trunks back to Tacoma and secretly sold the opium, and then reported to the department that the boxes found in the trunks had no real opium, but only dummy packages of tar. It is estimated that there was \$30,000 worth of the drug in the trunks. Gardner was finally removed from office. He continued his smuggling in a private capacity, and was eventually arrested and sent to prison. A great deal of opium is brought in by Chinamen. Nearly every harbor who is smuggled into the United States brings more or less opium, and Chinamen aid the smugglers on this side of the border. Opium is sometimes hidden in the coal of the ships which land at San Francisco and other points along the coast. It is brought in the bottoms of trunks, and in many other ways.

NAVAL OFFICERS AS SMUGGLERS.

I am told that a great many things are brought into the United States by naval officers. They are classed as personal effects, and they are not as a rule offered by the officials for sale, though such cases have been known. Not a long time ago a merchant vessel was sent by the Navy Department to Havana to bring back to the United States some shipwrecked sailors. While there the officers in charge bought a great lot of cheap cigars. There were so many of them that they corded them up in a great pile on the deck and over this pile they threw a lot of old catfish. When the customs officers appeared and asked them if they had any dutiable goods on board the naval officers pointed to this pile and said that it contained cigars. They laughed as they did so, and the customs officers thought that they were being fooled. They had never seen catfish put up in that way, and they passed over the stack of sardines without further examination.

Liquors have been brought into Canada by naval officers, and one of the revenue marine corps told me once of an experience which he had at Halifax. He had gone into a large liquor store and the man had offered him some very cheap cigars and showed him samples of the wine, liquors and brandies. As he tasted them the merchant said: "Of course, you want to load up here with Scotch whisky and Hennessy brandy. You can get these goods here for half what they will cost you in the United States. We are doing a big trade with the navy. A number of your ships have called here, and I have sold the officers large orders." My friend of the revenue marine said that this was against the law, and that he could not take goods into the United States in that way. The merchant was much surprised, and he had evidently been doing a large business with the navy.

It is not often that our American consuls try to rob Uncle Sam, but they do it now and then. Some years ago a United States Senator was caught smuggling. His son was vice consul at one of the interior towns in Germany, and he had sent in the State Department mail box a package to reach the North Pole, which was supposed to contain papers. The treasury Department had been much troubled with petty smuggling, and in some way this package came under the eyes of one of the special agents abroad. He wrote to the State Department and asked if it could be examined. The Senator was notified when the package arrived, and he went to the department for it. He was told that there had been a question raised as to the contents of the package, and that it should be opened at the department. He stormed and protested. The clerk in charge, however, quietly opened the package in spite of his objections, and then held up before the Senator's eyes about thirty yards of the finest black gossamer silk. The Senator at once subsided. He became as meek as a lamb, and allowed the silk to be sent on to New York for appraisal. The duty was high at that time, and he paid about a dollar a yard for that and it came to one hundred and thirty yards. The Senator was connected with the State Department at the time.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

In mediaeval times not only were living prisoners ransomed by their friends, but a ransom was demanded even for the bodies of those slain in action.

In the State of Texas one murder occurs to every 3,500 inhabitants. In Illinois this number is considerably lower. The bodies of the slain are buried in the ground, and the bodies of the slain are buried in the ground, and the bodies of the slain are buried in the ground.

Among the treasures of the Austrian crown are some religious relics that are considered by the church. They include a nail from the cross, a fragment from the manger at Bethlehem, fragments of apron worn by the Virgin, and a tooth of John the Baptist.

The oldest book in the world is "The Rig Veda," which was in existence, complete as we have it now, 1,500 years before Christ, and not the so-called "Book of the Dead" from Egypt, consisting of disjointed fragments, collected from many sources. The earliest of which may possibly be dated as early as 600 B. C.

Buckle devoted nearly twenty years to the collection of materials for his "History of Civilization." He wrote only a portion of the introduction, which remains a great monument to his literary and philosophical work. If the work had been finished on the same scale as begun, a hundred volumes would not have sufficed.

Goliath's recorded height is only nine feet nine inches, which is within the bounds of possibility. Pliny speaks of seeing a giantess ten feet high, and a skeleton of a giant was found in 1868. There are weird stories of the Emperor Maximilian, who was reported to be nine feet high and to have eaten forty pounds of meat a day.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

A Knowing One.

"I don't gamble," said the cannibal, as he took the lid off the sailor's soup. "But guess I'll open this Jack pot."

The Rescue.

Softly—Inkerman's ads get bigger every week. How can he pay out so much for big ads?

Nothing in the Voice.

Puck. "Why do you say 'she spoke in a hollow voice'?" "Well, it was the same voice she tried on the road a year, and there was nothing in it then."

Restricted.

Detroit Tribune. "Can you," she inquired, "bring dishonor upon a proud name?" "This is said to be on account of the danger of fire, the houses in small places generally being thatched with straw."

Punch. Matured (as they pass the conservatory)—Dear me! What a delicious smell of (archly)—orange blossoms. (Oh, no—really—I assure you, nothing of the sort!)

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New York Weekly. Workingman—"If you fellows won't work and your heads would be a little less big."

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